

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1        1. A data structure for providing a catalog from a manufacturer to a customer  
2 comprising:  
3              a catalog header portion;  
4              a system identification portion, the system identification portion including a system  
5                  type indicator, the system type indicator indicating whether a system is a  
6                  bundled system or a custom system, and;  
7              a system option portion.

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1        2. The data structure of claim 1 wherein the catalog header portion applies to an  
2 entire catalog.

1        3. The data structure of claim 1 wherein the system identification portion  
2 includes a plurality of business rule elements that apply to a particular system

1        4. The data structure of claim 3 wherein the plurality of business rule elements  
2 include a system identification element, the system identification element providing a  
3 manufacture assigned unique identifier.

1        5. The data structure of claim 3 wherein the plurality of business rule elements  
2 include a system identification effective date element, the system identification effective date  
3 element providing an effective date that a particular configuration is allowed to be purchased.

1        6. The data structure of claim 3 wherein the plurality of business rule elements  
2 include a system identification action element, the system identification action element  
3 programmably informing a customer what function to perform on a system.

1        7. The data structure of claim 6 wherein the functions to be performed include an  
2 add function, a replace function and a discontinue function.

1        8. The data structure of claim 1 wherein the system option portion includes a  
2 plurality of relationship indicator elements.

1           9. The data structure of claim 8 wherein the plurality of relationship indicator  
2 elements include a relationship identification element, the relationship identification element  
3 providing an indicator that communicates for a component, a relationship of the component  
4 to other components.

1           10. A data structure for acknowledging receipt a catalog by a customer to a  
2 manufacturer comprising:  
3           an acknowledgement header portion, the acknowledgement header portion including a  
4           reference identification element referencing a catalog containing custom  
5           systems; and  
6           an acknowledgement detail portion.

1           11. The data structure of claim 10 wherein the acknowledgement header portion  
2 applies to an entire catalog.

1           12. The data structure of claim 10 wherein the acknowledgement header portion  
2 includes a reference identification element, the reference identification element providing a  
3 reference to a catalog number corresponding to a catalog number from the catalog for which  
4 receipt is acknowledged.

1           13. The data structure of claim 10 wherein the acknowledgement header portion  
2 includes an acknowledgement version number element, and acknowledgement date element.

1           14. A data structure for providing an order from a customer to a manufacturer  
2 using a catalog that includes custom systems, the data structure comprising:  
3           an order header portion;  
4           an order detail portion, the order detail portion including information about a specific  
5           configuration for the order; and,  
6           an option detail portion, the option detail portion including information allowing  
7           ordering of a custom system.

1           15. The data structure of claim 10 wherein the order header portion applies to a  
2 plurality of orders.

1        16. The data structure of claim 10 wherein the order header portion includes a  
2 planned ship code element, the planned ship code element enabling a customer to request a  
3 ship date of less than a contracted lead time.

1        17. The data structure of claim 14 wherein the option detail portion includes an  
2 option indicator element, the option indicator element indicating types of options being  
3 ordered.

1        18. The data structure of claim 14 wherein the option detail portion includes an  
2 option count element, the option count element indicating how many options are being  
3 ordered.

1        19. The data structure of claim 14 wherein the option detail portion includes an  
2 option action element, the option action element indicating what action is being used to  
3 include a particular option in the order.

1        20. A data structure for acknowledging receipt an order by a customer to a  
2 manufacturer comprising:  
3              an acknowledgement header portion, the acknowledgement header portion including a  
4              reference identification element referencing a custom order; and  
5              an acknowledgement detail portion.

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